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CAMBODIA

SUCCESS STORY

Trafficked Girl Gains Freedom, Vocation

A young woman escapes her captors and charts her own path



Ho Sinary, a survivor of human trafficking, at a vocational training center in Siem Reap province, northwest Cambodia.

Sinary's experience is thought to be increasingly common in Cambodia, where 47 percent of all commercial sex workers state they were forced into the industry.

"I have never thought to have such opportunity as today," said Ho Sinary. Twenty-one-year-old Sinary became disillusioned when her neighbor tricked her and sold her to a brothel in Toul Kok, Phnom Penh. The second daughter among four siblings in a poor family, Sinary's father is a farmer and her mother sells vegetable outside Phnom Penh. When her father fell sick, the family's financial situation worsened. To support her family, Sinary looked for a job. Her neighbor promised her a good job serving beer in a restaurant. Instead, the neighbor sold her to a brothel, where she earned no money but was forced to serve seven to 10 clients per day. After several months, Sinary and a coworker escaped from the brothel. Afraid of being caught by the owner, she did not return home and instead took a job in Kompong Cham.

Struggling to earn a living, she returned to Phnom Penh but dared not see her family. She was afraid they would blame her. She saw no choice but to continue as a mobile sex worker. Soon, life changed for the better when she was introduced to a USAID-funded shelter and vocational scholarship program. Sinary is now training as a receptionist at a respected vocational training center in Siem Reap. One of the top students in her class, Sinary will graduate in September 2006. The center is considering her as a candidate for additional training in Australia, which could mean greater opportunities for employment and a higher salary when she returns to Cambodia.

The training center assists trafficking victims in obtaining vocational skills in hotel and restaurant service, cooking, handicraft production, wedding planning, and sewing. The shelter provides protection and rehabilitation services to victims and helps them find jobs with wages that allow them to build a normal life. USAID's anti-trafficking program also supports training and public forums for police officers, teachers, migrant workers, and community members to help citizens and authorities better understand the consequences of sex trafficking and child sexual exploitation. When she finishes training and obtains a good job, Sinary may even find the courage to reunite with her family.